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ABSTRACT

A comprehensive survey analyzed future recruiting in the communications disciplines, including trends in enrollments, faculty retirements, the production of doctorates, and a content analysis of academic position advertisements. A questionnaire was developed to investigate staffing trends in communication studies for the years 1993-1998 and mailed to 312 administrators of institutions offering course or degrees in communication. Response rate was 79% or 246 questionnaires returned. Of the respondents, 53 institutions reported an emphasis on mass media studies; 82 institutions reported a speech communication emphasis. A combined mass media/speech communication study was reported by 105 administrators. Most responses came from administrators in public institutions, and programs were generally reported to be small. Enrollments are expected to increase in the near future, and most institutions also expect some faculty retirements in the next five years. Doctoral degrees are the rule for new hires, and "on-the-job" experience is also preferred. Research experience and publication are additional qualifications. The most striking finding is that there may well be a shortage of qualified faculty candidates in the coming years combined with rising enrollments. Perhaps the Ph.D. process needs to be evaluated to improve current completion rates. (Contains 7 tables of data and 20 notes.) (NKA)

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COMMUNICATION FACULTY RECRUITMENT 1993-1998 : A SURVEY OF STAFFING NEEDS

by

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Paper presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division, AEJMC, 1994 meeting, Atlanta.

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COMMUNICATION FACULTY RECRUITMENT 1993-1998:

A SURVEY OF STAFFING NEEDS

The present paper reports part of the findings of a comprehensive study of the analysis of future faculty recruiting in the communications disciplines. The larger project includes analyses of trends in enrollments, faculty retirements, the production of doctorates in communication, and a content analysis of academic position advertisements.[1] As part of that project, the present investigation was conducted to forecast faculty recruitment trends in the communications disciplines for 1993-1998. A national survey of communication administrators revealed projections of enrollment trends, staffing needs and characteristics desired in new faculty, as well as some basic characteristics of communications institutions.

The major conclusion reached is that the communications disciplines may face a shortage of qualified candidates needed to fill a growing number of openings that will become available in the 1990s. This includes faculty positions in both mass media and speech communication studies. This shortage may have a dramatic effect on the composition of communications faculties and ultimately may alter the direction of those disciplines.

BACKGROUND

The parent project brings together numerous predictions of faculty shortages across general categories of academic disciplines.[2] In the last few years, these have appeared with growing frequency in both popular and scholarly publications.[3] These

accounts of expected shortages generally cite a lack of qualified candidates with advanced degrees needed to fill anticipated vacancies in the physical and social sciences and the humanities. The reports chronicle a general trend in higher education that is troubling: there will not be enough Ph.D.s produced in this country to replace the growing numbers of professors that will retire by the end of this century. Furthermore, this problem will be exacerbated by rising enrollments.[4]

This increase in retirements will take place because a considerable number of current faculty members began their careers during the 1950s and 1960s, when former servicemen studying under the G. I. Bill and their "baby boom" children resulted in an unprecedented expansion in the number of college attendees. A combination of post-war prosperity and a bulge in the college-age population led to an explosion of enrollments and a consequent enlargement in college faculties across the nation.[5]

Faculty members who got their first teaching positions during that period are now reaching retirement age.[6] Hastening that process are "golden handshakes" from many financially strapped institutions that are encouraging early retirement of older faculty members.[7] These settlements are made to make room for younger and cheaper scholars who will accept lower salaries and less generous benefits.

Compounding the problem of increasing retirements is a lack of compensatory production of new Ph.D.s, which ironically comes after a period of overproduction, at least in some fields. Graduate school draft deferments during the Vietnam War helped create a "Ph.D. glut" in certain areas. Enrollments in graduate programs reached all time highs during the period, with some 5,400 humanities doctorates awarded in 1973.[8]

The result was more people holding doctorates in many fields of the liberal arts than were needed to fill academic vacancies. Stories of "Ph.D.s driving taxis" began to scare many away from Ph.D. programs. MBA and law degree programs began to attract those students qualified to pursue the Ph.D., luring them away with promises of more lucrative careers.[9] By 1988 the number of doctorates granted in the humanities had dropped by a third, to around 3,600.[10] Furthermore, shortages of Ph.D.s in the 1990s is predicted to be a significant problem, particularly in the liberal arts.[11]

While the available number of doctorates in all fields is declining, the opposite is happening with undergraduate students. At the same time that retirements are increasing, and replacements are not being produced in adequate numbers, forecasts indicate that enrollments will continue to rise. A steady increase is predicted to begin in the mid 1990s, comprised of the children of post-war "baby boomers."[12]

While previously published reports have addressed faculty retirements, rising enrollments and predicted shortages of Ph.D.s in broad categories of the sciences and humanities, none has specifically addressed the communications disciplines. For this reason, the present study inquired whether these trends can also be found within the various fields of communication.

METHOD

A survey questionnaire was developed to investigate staffing trends in communication studies for the years 1993-1998. The instrument was designed to elicit several kinds of information from administrators. These included characteristics of their

institution, projections of retirements and replacements, predictions of program expansion and qualifications sought in new faculty.

The questionnaire was mailed to a nationwide sample of administrators of institutions offering courses or degrees in communication. This sample was drawn systematically from the membership directories of two large professional organizations: the Speech Communication Association (SCA), and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC).[13] The SCA directories listed a total of 840 institutional members. Its AEJMC counterpart listed 408.

A 25 percent systematic sample was drawn from each of the rosters, for a total of 312 institutions, of which 210 were from the SCA and 102 were from AEJMC. Questionnaires were sent to the persons whose names were listed as administrators in the respective directories. Accompanying each questionnaire was a cover letter describing the study, a copy of a New York Times article which discussed forthcoming faculty shortages, and a graph that showed a steady decline in the production of communication Ph.D.s.[14] A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided for the respondents to return the completed instrument.

To maximize the response rate, a follow-up postcard was sent to non-responding institutions a few weeks after the initial survey mailing. To increase the response rate further, a second complete package was mailed several weeks later to the few remaining administrators that had not yet responded. Of 312 requests sent, 246 were returned for a 79 percent rate of return.[15]

FINDINGS

The survey is a descriptive study. No theories or predictive hypotheses are at stake. Thus, the findings are presented and discussed below in the form of descriptive tables of frequencies and percentages.

Categorization of the Responding Institutions

For purposes of analysis, responding schools, departments and programs were classified as either mass media, speech communication or combined mass media/speech communication institutions. These classifications were based on areas of study offered by responding administrators as reported in the questionnaires.

Those 53 institutions classified as emphasizing mass media studies made up 22.1 percent of the respondents. They reported offering areas of study such as advertising, broadcasting, broadcast journalism, film, print journalism, magazine, newspaper, mass media, photography and public relations. Another 82 institutions (34.2 percent) were classified as having a speech communication emphasis. These indicated a focus on such areas as speech communication, cross-cultural communication, public speaking, rhetoric, persuasion and theater. The 105 administrators that reported programs of study in both mass media and communication made up the remaining 43.7 percent and were assigned to the combined mass media/speech communication category.

Institutional Characteristics

Most of the respondents said that they are public institutions (60.0 percent). The remainder indicated being private. There was no appreciable difference in public/private status for the different categories of respondents.

Most of the respondents' communication degree programs tend to be small, with more than three-quarters reporting less than 500 undergraduate students. The level of undergraduate enrollments was also found to vary with the type of institution. As Table 1 indicates, most responding mass media and combined mass media/speech communication institutions tend to be larger than those in the speech communication category.

Table 1

UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT

WITHIN SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT/INSTITUTION

	Mass Media		Speech Comm		Combined Mass Media/ Speech Comm		Totals	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Under 100	10	18.9	54	65.8	29	27.6	93	38.7
101-500	29	54.7	12	14.6	48	45.7	89	37.1
501-1,000	12	22.6	3	3.7	22	21.0	37	15.4
1001 or more	1	1.9	4	4.9	6	5.7	11	4.6
No response	1	1.9	9	11.0	0	0.0	10	4.2
Totals:	53	100.0	82	100.0	105	100.0	240	100.0

Almost half (47.9 percent) of the respondents reported having a graduate program. The majority (40.8 percent) of those have 100 students or less. Institutions offering education in mass media and combined mass media/speech communication are more likely to offer graduate studies than those with a speech communication emphasis. About a quarter to one-third of mass media establishments have no graduate program, compared to almost three-quarters of speech communication schools, departments and programs, perhaps due to the generally smaller size of those teaching speech communication.

Rising Enrollments

An important factor in anticipating faculty recruitment needs is the number of students that will have to be taught. As noted, there was an explosive increase in college-bound youth in the 1950s and 1960s. However, the birth rate began to decline in the 1960s, bringing about continuing decreases in the size of college enrollments starting in the late 1970s.[16]

That trend has reversed. The birth rate began to accelerate again in the mid-1970s, and those children will be of college age in the mid-1990s.[17] The increase in the number of available college-age persons will result in rising enrollments in a variety of academic disciplines, including communication studies.

As Table 2 shows, a majority of administrators predicted that the number of students in communication courses will increase over the next five years. Over two-thirds said that enrollments would increase either considerably or slightly. Only a handful

reported that they face a decline in enrollment. These trends are roughly consistent across the three categories of institutions.

Table 2

ANTICIPATED ENROLLMENT TRENDS

1993-1998

	Mass Media		Speech Comm		Combined Mass Media/ Speech Comm		Totals	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Increase greatly	6	11.3	15	18.3	19	18.1	40	16.7
Increase slightly	21	39.6	40	48.8	54	51.4	115	47.9
Remain stable	17	32.1	20	24.4	28	26.7	65	27.1
Decrease Slightly	9	17.0	4	4.9	4	3.8	17	7.1
Decrease greatly	0	0.0	2	2.4	0	0.0	2	0.8
No response	0	0.0	1	1.2	0	0.0	1	0.4
Totals:	53	100.0	82	100.0	105	100.0	240	100.0

This upward trend in enrollments will help determine the number of future faculty needed and will also result in expansion of current programs.

Faculty Retirements

Faculty retirement is a second major factor that must be considered in estimating recruiting needs in the years ahead. Some retirements were anticipated over the next five years by almost three out of every five responding administrators. Approximately half of all retirements are expected in the 105 combined mass media/speech communication institutions, a rate of 1.49 for every school, department or program. About a quarter of all retirements will occur in mass media programs, a rate of 1.62 for each. Speech communication will face a similar number of retirements, but with a lower rate of 1.10 due to the larger number of institutions.

Replacements for retirees will make up almost half of new hires over the next five years. As Table 3 shows, most of the replacements will be sought by combined mass media/speech communication schools, departments and programs. The remainder will be split evenly between mass media and speech communication. A total of 332 replacements for retirees are forecast, for an average of 1.38 per institution.

Expanding Programs

Table 3 also shows that program expansion is yet another factor that will require faculty recruitment. An encouraging sign of the discipline's health is that 172 (71.6 percent) of the respondents reported they will be hiring because of growing communication programs. They expect a total of 373 positions to open up to handle this expansion, yielding an average of 1.55 for each responding institution.

Table 3

FACULTY HIRINGS BY GENERAL FIELD

1993-1998

	Mass Media		Speech Comm		Combined Mass Media/ Speech Comm		Totals	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Hirings for replacement	86	50.3	90	47.4	156	45.3	332	47.1
Hirings for expansion	85	49.7	100	52.6	188	54.7	373	52.9
Totals:	171	100.0	190	100.0	344	100.0	705	100.0

Additionally, Table 3 shows that the greatest number of openings will be in schools, departments and programs that offer a mix of mass media and speech communication studies. The total number of job openings in the combined mass media/speech area is predicted to be 344, for an average of 3.28 for each institution. This will account for almost half of all new positions in the next five years. The remainder of job openings will include 190 in speech communication and 171 in mass media studies, each averaging at 2.32 and 3.23 openings per institution respectively. To summarize the findings on anticipated recruitment needs, the 240 administrators responding to the survey predict a total of 705 job openings over the next five years. This yields an average of 2.94 positions that will need to be filled for each communication institution throughout the nation. The causes of these openings will be divided almost evenly between retirements and expansion of programs.

Candidates' Degree Requirements

The kinds of qualifications administrators will expect from potential new faculty will be important factors in filling the considerable number of anticipated openings. The survey asked about qualifications required or preferred in new faculty.

A primary qualification considered when recruiting new faculty is the type of degree held. Table 4 shows that more than a third of the administrators flatly require a doctorate, while an additional half stated that they would prefer a Ph.D. This totals more than 85 percent who want doctorates. Only 11.7 percent indicated that a Ph.D. was unnecessary. Administrators of mass media and combined mass media/speech programs more frequently cited the need for a doctoral degree than those in speech communication, of whom almost a quarter said that the Ph.D. was not necessary.

Table 4

DOCTORATE TO BE REQUIRED IN NEW FACULTY

1993-1998

	Mass Media		Speech Comm		Combined Mass Media/ Speech Comm		Totals	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Required	12	22.6	25	30.5	42	40.0	79	32.9
Preferred	32	60.4	36	43.9	59	56.2	127	52.9
Not necessary	7	13.2	19	23.2	2	1.9	28	11.7
No response	2	3.8	2	2.4	2	1.9	6	2.5
Totals:	53	100.0	82	100.0	105	100.0	240	100.0

Additional Qualifications

Additional qualifications beyond the degree are illustrated by Tables 5, 6 and 7 for each of the communication institution categories. As indicated in the first column, teaching experience was reported as required or preferred by more than 95 percent of respondents across all types of institutions. Only a handful claimed that teaching experience was unnecessary.

Table 5

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS TO BE SOUGHT

IN NEW MASS MEDIA STUDIES FACULTY

1993-1998

	Teaching experience		Professional experience		Research experience		Publication	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Required	23	43.4	27	50.9	5	9.4	5	9.4
Preferred	29	54.7	23	43.4	36	67.9	36	67.9
Not necessary	0	0.0	2	3.8	11	20.8	10	18.9
No response	1	1.9	1	1.9	1	1.9	2	3.8
Totals:	53	100.0	53	100.0	53	100.0	53	100.0

Table 6

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS TO BE SOUGHT

IN NEW SPEECH COMMUNICATION FACULTY

1993-1998

	Teaching experience		Professional experience		Research experience		Publication	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Required	37	45.1	9	11.0	11	13.4	9	11.0
Preferred	42	51.3	54	65.8	33	40.2	40	48.8
Not necessary	2	2.4	15	18.3	35	42.7	31	37.8
No response	1	1.2	4	4.9	3	3.7	2	2.4
Totals:	82	100.0	82	100.0	82	100.0	82	100.0

Table 7

ADDITIONAL QUALIFICATIONS TO BE SOUGHT

IN NEW COMBINED MASS MEDIA/SPEECH COMMUNICATION FACULTY

1993-1998

	Teaching experience		Professional experience		Research experience		Publication	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Required	37	35.2	17	16.2	21	20.0	16	15.2
Preferred	62	59.0	68	64.8	66	62.9	74	70.5
Not necessary	4	3.8	18	17.1	15	14.3	12	11.4
No response	2	1.9	2	1.9	3	2.9	3	2.9
Totals:	105	100.0	105	100.0	105	100.0	105	100.0

Professional or "on-the-job" experience was indicated as required or preferred by at least three-fourths of all administrators. Almost all of those in mass media studies, some 94 percent, said they wanted such experience in their candidates. Only a small number said that professional experience was unnecessary.

Research experience was an additional qualification. The second column shows that a majority of respondents require or prefer such experience. However, as shown in Table 6, a large number of speech communication administrators indicated that research experience was not necessary.

Finally, scholarly publication was an additional qualification required or preferred by most administrators. While most of those in speech communication showed they would welcome publication, a substantial number reported that it was unnecessary.

DISCUSSION

The most striking finding of this survey is the number of faculty openings predicted for the next five years. If the findings have validity and are extrapolated to the approximately 1,248 AEJMC and SCA member institutions in the United States, there could be up to 2,820 openings in the 1993-1998 period.

As noted, some 85 percent of administrators surveyed will require or prefer that these new faculty members hold a doctorate, indicating an emphasis on hiring faculty able to conduct scholarly pursuits. This suggests a need for as many as 2,400 Ph.D.s before the end of the decade. This forecasted number is about double the currently projected 1,240 communication Ph.D.s expected to graduate in same period.[18]

Additional qualifications, such as prior teaching, professional background, research experience and publication are all cited as important by a substantial number of administrators. However, the number of candidates available for recruitment that actually possess these characteristics will undoubtedly be less than needed.

While many administrators hope to fulfill an idealistic "wish list," the facts make this unlikely. The implications of a much greater number of openings than qualified individuals gives those candidates that approach administrators' dreams the advantage of a "seller's market." Those schools not able to bargain for highly qualified candidates will certainly have to settle for less.

One method of filling openings may be to rely on professional communicators who, for one reason or another, have decided to leave industry. This would require an assumption that "experience is commensurate with an advanced degree." Such an assumption may or may not be valid. Many professionals may find the job of teaching in a classroom vastly different from working in industry and spend a great deal of time adjusting to the demands of higher education. Industry professionals lacking a research degree may also find the academic system of tenure and promotion to be a process unlike that found in industry.

Another important result of this study is the forecast of increasing enrollments by a majority of the administrators surveyed. While this is a healthy sign of continuing attractiveness of communications to new students, it will further worsen the faculty shortage. Teaching and advising responsibilities will become greater as an increase in enrollment of undergraduates outpaces the expansion of faculty. Additional burdens of research for recognition and promotion, maintaining contacts in industry to stay current, and service to the department will compete for increasingly smaller shares of time.

Schools may find it necessary to pass greater classroom responsibility to graduate teaching assistants already under the strain of pressures of their own teaching and research. However, using graduate teaching assistants in place of "real" professors has been the subject of growing complaints by many parents who pay ever-increasing tuition.[19] Teaching assistants may also find that increased responsibilities hinder their progress toward completion of their degrees, and this may help exacerbate the shortage of qualified candidates for new faculty openings.

CONCLUSIONS

The production of Ph.D.'s needs to be tied to trends in enrollment and retirements. The evidence suggests that the communications disciplines need to consider planning for faculty recruitment rather than counting on the luck of the draw. Ph.D. programs should coordinate their efforts with anticipated needs for new faculty. Doctoral students with their eyes on a career in teaching and scholarship should be trained so that their transition from student to assistant professor is a smooth one. Such training of new scholars would also make the job of recruiting committees easier.

Additionally, the Ph.D. production process needs to be evaluated to improve current completion rates. Currently only about half of all doctoral students complete the degree, despite great expenditure of resources by both faculty and students. Those that do complete the process may take up to 10 years to receive their hoods.[20] For some, the doctoral program begins to take on the appearance of a fraternity "hazing" rather than as preparation for a scholarly career. One inducement for doctoral advisers to get their proteges to complete their degrees more quickly might be to increase the recognition of service on doctoral committees as a valuable contribution to teaching when faculty are evaluated on an annual basis.

Unfortunately, the long time needed to complete doctoral degrees may mean that, for administrators and current faculty, the 1990s will be a decade of larger classes, more advisees, and many hours spent on faculty recruiting committees. For doctoral students just coming out of their programs, it may mean being able to bargain for a bigger office and perhaps even a closer parking space.

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2. Ibid.

3. John H. D'Armes, "Universities Must Lead Effort to Avert Impending National Shortages of Ph.D.'s," Chronicle of Higher Education, Jan. 17, 1990, p. B1; Eugene Arden, "Colleges Should Look to Retired Professors to Cope With Looming Faculty Shortages," Chronicle of Higher Education, Jan. 3, 1990, p.B1; Don L. Boroughs, "Remember the Ph.D. Glut: Colleges Will Go Begging." U.S. News and World Report, Sept. 25, 1989, p. 55; Elizabeth Futas and Fay Zipkowitz, "The Faculty Vanishes," Library Journal, Sept 1, 1991, p. 148; E. Gordon Gee, "A Lost Generation in Higher Education," U.S. News and World Report, April 4, 1988; Elaine El-Khawas, "A Faculty Shortage Looms Ahead," AGB Reports, Sept./Oct. 1989, p. 22; William G. Bowen and Neil L. Rudenstine, In Pursuit of the Ph.D. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989); Anthony DePalma, "Shortage of Professors is Envisioned," The New York Times, January 22, 1992, p. A18.

4. Elaine El-Khawas, Campus Trends, 1991 (Washington, D.C.:American Council on Higher Education, 1991). A survey of 411 institutions revealed that over the next five years (1993-1998) 38 percent expect at least 15 percent of their faculty to retire and 55 percent expect 10 to 15 percent would retire. Only a few reported that less than 5 percent of their faculty would retire.

5. Gee, op. cit. Gee was President of the University of Colorado.

6. It is difficult to predict the effect of the repeal of mandatory retirement for college professors on January 1, 1994. According to Freedman, there may be little immediate impact since many campuses have been allowing faculty to remain in their positions after age 70 on a year-to-year basis. M. Freedman, "Retirement Rule Threatens to Corrupt College Tenure. Newsday, December 1, 1992, p. 101.

7. Carolyn J. Mooney, "Expected End of Mandatory Retirement in 1990's Unlikely to Cause a Glut of Professors, Study Finds." Chronicle of Higher Education, Dec. 16, 1987, p. A11.

8. DePalma, op. cit.

9. Boroughs, op. cit.

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11. William Bowen and Julie Anne Sosa, Prospects for Faculty in the Arts and Sciences. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

12. Birth rate trends cited in U.S. Center for Health Statistics Vital Statistics of the United States 1988 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1988) show total live births steadily rising from 3,144,198 in 1975 to an estimated 4,021,000 in 1989. Those born in 1975 will reach college age in 1993. The U.S. Department of Education predicts that college enrollments for all disciplines will rise some 10 percent, from 14,235,000 in 1992 to 15,692,000 in 2000.

13. The administrative units of institutions offering study in communications disciplines are known variously as schools, departments, programs, sequences, etc. This study included only those units that granted a degree.

14. DePalma, op. cit. The graph appears in DeFleur, et al., op. cit.

15. Only four questionnaires had to be discarded because they were inadequately filled out. Two surveys from schools outside the United States were not included in the present analysis.

16. DeFleur, et al., p. 9.

17. Ibid.

18. DeFleur, et al., op. cit.

19. Martin Anderson, "What! Me Teach? I'm a Professor," Wall Street Journal, September 8, 1992, p. A6.

20. Bowen and Rudenstine, op. cit.